

## *Care of newbie daters*

**M**any midlife daters reenter the dating scene after a long absence. If they aren't a longtime single, they are available again because of divorce or death of their partner. At this age, many are sensitive to fading looks and possibly squishy bodies, even though others are more buff and more attractive than ever before. Midlifers are more aware of their shortcomings, which can overshadow their pride of accomplishments, both career and personal. And they aren't sure exactly what is expected of them during the dating process. They are a bit fragile at first.

If you've been dating for a while, especially if most of your dates have come from online sites, you've learned some of the ropes. You are more savvy now than you were as a neophyte dater.

If you are an experienced dater, I think you have some responsibility — even if it is just for your own karma — to treat newbie daters with kid gloves. Not that you wouldn't do that with everyone, but I think it's especially important to help guide new daters through the process, sharing with them what you've learned during your dating experiences.



For example, I learned from an experienced online dating gal pal that it is expected for you to exchange emails after the first date to express if you want to see the other again or not. I would not have known this was considered a common courtesy if she hadn't enlightened me. I would have assumed I would hear from the man if he was interested in seeing me again. So I made it a habit to always email the guy within 24 hours of our first encounter to thank him and express whether I was interested in doing it again or not. Many times he initiated that email or even called after the date.

Because of your experience, you know that many online daters see multiple people simultaneously, so you can't assume the guy is seeing only you. If you are starting to see a fledgling dater, explain that it is common to go out with multiple people, each once or twice before deciding whether to focus on only one or keep looking. So be upfront if you are dating others. And even if you're not seeing others, you might drop this information into the conversation so they know to ask a future date outright.

You also know that it is unfortunately prevalent for people to stop responding to calls, emails and IMs when they don't want to continue dating someone. So even though you are careful to clearly communicate you're not interested in a man any longer, help him understand this regrettably common practice so he won't be scratching his head when it happens to him. So if you decide to stop seeing this dating novice, take extra care to communicate you're moving on as graciously

and gently — yet clearly — as you can.

I've found that those who haven't dated much or in a long time can easily become attached to you if you are just your usual nice self. I think it is because they have not had much (any?) attention or affection in a long while. If they get a single, attractive woman to look them in the eye, smile and carry on a fun conversation for more than a few minutes, they think they've found The One.

I once had a coffee date with a man who had just filed for divorce after a 25-year marriage. I was his first post-marriage date. He was giddy during our coffee, talking about plans for taking me here and doing that together. I knew I was not interested in seeing him again, so I encouraged him to take advantage of his new-found freedom and date a number of women to really find out what he wanted and who was a match. So even if you only see him once, you can be a mini-coach to him, sharing any hard-won wisdom you've gleaned so he's not blindsided with what you know are common midlife dating behaviors.

I had a second encounter with a widower who lost his wife of 30 years the previous year. I may have been his first dating experience in over 30 years. So I was conscious of making sure I treated him with tenderness and care.

What advice would you share with a midlife dating tenderfoot? What have you learned the hard way that is more common than you'd imagined before you started this adventure?

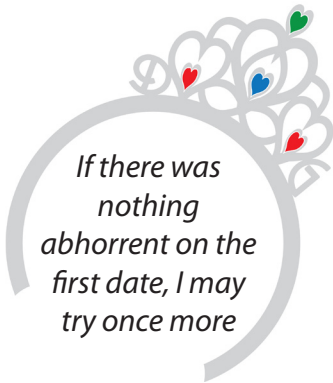




# Deciding to see him again or not

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Even when there isn't the immediate physical attraction or chemistry, I'll sometimes see a guy again to see if there is any underlying spark that needs a second chance to be kindled. If there was nothing abhorrent on the first date, I may try once more.



For good example, a gentleman arrived on time and wore nice, pressed casual clothes for our second-date stroll to my local neighborhood dance party. He didn't try to maul me with kisses and too-soon affection — in fact we only hugged hello and goodbye.

However, during the stroll and dinner, he interrupted me a lot — something that is a pet peeve of mine. While he did seem interested in what I was saying, he

also often tried to summarize what I said — but he was wrong each time. I am usually a clear speaker, and when others summarize they most often get it right. So it was clear he and I weren't thinking along the same paths, and it got annoying after a while to keep correcting him.

So the bottom line question for me is, “Do I want to spend more time with this guy?” Do I find him interesting — or appealing — enough to invest another hour? While I'm easy going and can find interest in nearly anything, if there isn't enough to keep me interested, it's best to let him go. I'm afraid that is my conclusion about this man.

*Are you in agreement that  
you're dating each other?*

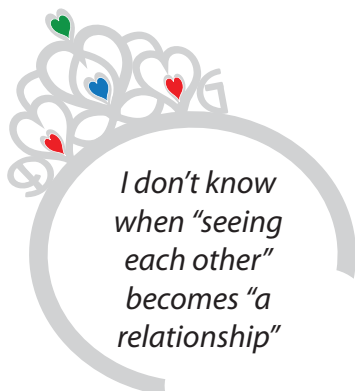
I recently read that a man can go out with a woman 2-5 times (or more) before he considers them dating. A woman often leaps to that conclusion on the second date. (A male friend even suggested that some of us consider we're "dating" a guy we haven't met yet, only talked to by email or phone!)

There are some circumstances where it could be nebulous. Perhaps you are workmates, gym mates, or classmates and you invite each other for coffee, a hike, a movie, or over to your house for dinner. Maybe you either go Dutch or take turns treating. Or one picks up the movie and the other dinner. Even if you are physical, like cuddling during a movie, unless there's some smooching, it still can be nebulous. And sometimes even making out isn't a sign that you're dating.

In "What is the definition of a date?" (in the *Date or Wait: Are You Ready for Mr. Great?* book) I shared my early confusion about what constitutes a date.



After dating a man a handful of times, with plenty of smooching, I made some reference to “our relationship.” He adamantly corrected me that we weren’t in a “relationship.” I asked what he called what we were in then. He said we were “hanging out,” and “seeing each other.”



I don't know when “seeing each other” becomes “a relationship” — at least in that guy’s mind. I’m guessing it has to do with deciding to be exclusive. Interestingly, we “saw each other” for 6 weeks before he told me in an IM that we shouldn’t see each other again. I guess

that if we were “in a relationship” I might have earned a breakup email instead.

Some people have told me that meeting for coffee with someone from a dating site isn’t a date. It’s a “meet” to see if you want to have a date. I could argue both sides. Fundamentally, to me a date is when you spend time with someone to explore if there is romantic potential.

Because of this ambiguity, I’m told that some men don’t get into “date” mode until the second, third or more encounter. Because he hasn’t decided to woo you, he sees no need to call regularly, dress nicely, or show other signs that he’s interested in you. He’s in “I like her, but not sure I’m that interested in her” mode. So if you

think “second dates and beyond mean we’re dating and he needs to woo me with calls, flowers, etc.,” you’re setting yourself up for frustration. If you get on his case about not calling, he’ll be out of there in a flash if he doesn’t realize you’re in different places. If he sees he needs to step up his romance or lose you, he will if he’s interested. Otherwise, he may have the “let’s be friends” talk.

At what point do you consider yourself “dating” a guy?

